The Builder.

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IF the extraordinary ruins and ancient monuments to which we have already referred speak eloquently of the Ireland of the past — dead Ireland, so to speak,—BELFAST, in the north, illustrates no less forcibly and flatteringly the Ireland of to-day,—living Ireland. The progress that has been made there within a few years is quite marvellous: within less than a century the population has increased from 8,549, to 110,000. Numerous important buildings have been erected and are in progress: improvements in the town are being made in every direction: the docks are full of vessels, the streets alive with activity. The cotton-trade is at the bottom of all this; but it would be useful if all the springs were sought out and laid bare to view. Belfast should prove a regenerating centre: let its inhabitants endeavour efficiently to execute their mission. As it happens that the British Association for the Advancement of Science are to meet here on the 1st of next month, many of our readers will be led to see it for themselves. There is more doing here than in any other part of Ireland. Within the last six years the town council have spent from 50,000*l.* to 60,000*l.* in opening new streets and widening old ones: quays have been formed, and all the necessary buildings for municipal purposes built. The new Court-house is just now completed. It is built of Scotch stone, has a Corinthian portico of large size, and cost 20,000*l.* It contains a shire-hall, court of record, and criminal court, and appears to be very conveniently arranged for the accommodation of those engaged in its various parts. There is a want of connection between the portico and the wings, and the columns in the upper story of the hall are somewhat attenuated; nevertheless, it is a very worthy structure. The architect was Mr. Charles Lanyon, the county surveyor, who has had the good fortune to create the town, architecturally. Amongst his other works are the prison, opposite the court-house, which is after the Pentonville model, to accommodate 450 persons (if we may use the word), and cost 60,000*l.*; the Queen's College, illustrated by us some time ago; the Northern Bank, a Doric structure of Portland stone, just now completed at a cost of 14,000*l.*; the Ulster Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, Tudor in style, erected by subscription, and which cost 9,000*l.*; schools for 1,000 children attached to the workhouse (of basaltic stone, with white quoins); St. Paul's Episcopalian Church, an Early English structure, with a small bell tower and five-light east window; and many others. In the Botanic Gardens (admirably kept) the same architect is joining the two existing glass houses by a central dome, 45 feet high; and he is building, amongst other things, some schools near the Magdalene (Early English), and a Presbyterian College, at the back of the Queen's College. It is worth mentioning, as a striking instance of the want of appreciation of an architect's services which prevails in England as well as Ireland, that, notwithstanding all this and much more, the name of the designer of these various buildings does not once appear in the local guide-book which has been published there.

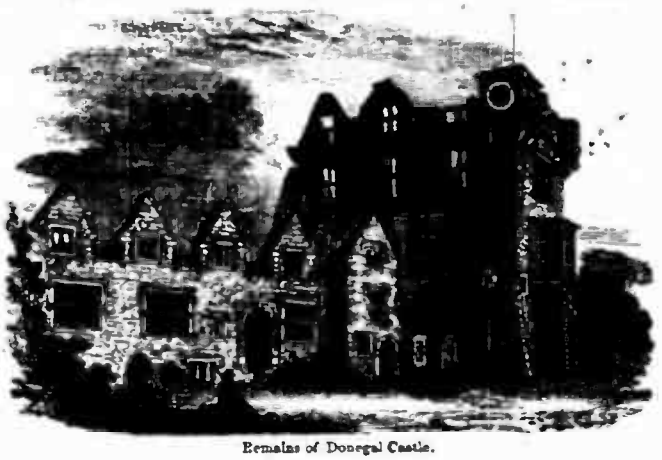
Of *The Presbyterian College* now in progress we give an engraving.* It is being built of stone from the Scrabo quarries, about twelve miles from Belfast; it is Italian in style, and has a frontispiece of attached Doric columns, carrying an entablature which breaks round each column, and an attic. The cost of the complete design would be about 6,000*l.*: the front part alone is being built at present, and the cost of this will be about 3,200*l.*†

A new Custom House is about to be built near the Northern Bank, which will entail an expenditure of 15,000*l.* for the site, and from 26,000*l.* to 30,000*l.* for the edifice: this will be paid for by Government. On the quay, foundations are being prepared for a new Ballast Office. The foundations are nearly everywhere bad in Belfast, and require great care: even then buildings are found to sink bodily several inches. The want of hydraulic lime, as we understand, prevents the use of concrete, and piling is therefore usually resorted to for large edifices.*

It is a brick county, and heretofore many very bad bricks have been used: recently, however, some improvement has been made in this respect. A hotel keeper, of the city, Mr. Moore, has invested a considerable sum in the erection of machines, &c. and is producing some satisfactory results.

There seems to be at present but little real appreciation of art, but the School of Design, and other agencies now in operation, will have their effect, it may be hoped, in due time.

Not far from Belfast will be found *Antrim* Round Tower, illustrated in our last. In this county, too, there are numerous castles and embattled residences. Scattered over Ireland, generally, there are many such; mostly of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. *Donegal Castle*, in the north-west, is a finely situated example of them, although the foundation of the structure is of an earlier date.



Remains of Donegal Castle.

Let us now run back to redeem our promise as to the celebrated *Rock of Cashel*, which is crowned with the most imposing pile of ruins in Ireland, of great size and deep interest. Cashel is on the line between Dublin and Cork, and those who would visit the rock should stop at Goold's Cross station, where there is a public car to take you over the five Irish miles that intervene between that and the spot desired. Here, on an isolated lofty mass of limestone, stand a Round Tower; a stone-roofed edifice called Cormac's Chapel, built between 1127 and 1134; a lofty unroofed church, known as the Cathedral; and an embattled tower at the west end. It was at once a royal residence, a fortress, and a bishop's seat: Cashel, indeed, means, in Irish, a hill-fortress or keep. The Cathedral is of large size, in the Early Pointed style: it has transepts, but no aisles, and at the east is vaulted with rough stone. It cannot be earlier than the thirteenth century, although some of the capitals have a Norman aspect. There are chapels on the east side of the transepts, and against the end wall of the south transept there is a series of figures in low relief under ogee canopies, representing the apostles, with their symbols and their names over them. Cormac's Chapel consists of nave and chancel, with two square towers (one on either side): the tower on one side has a pyramidal stone top: the top of the other is flat. The semi-circular arch prevails. The details are all Norman in character, ruder than we should find them of the same date in England, and the building serves to show clearly how totally different in style those remains of earlier churches are to which we have elsewhere referred. It is impossible to avoid recognising at once the fact that the churches at Glendalough, Monasterboice, and elsewhere, some of which we have described, belong to a period long anterior to the Norman invasion. There can be no doubt about it in the mind of any qualified to judge, and documentary evidence confirms the impression given by the monuments themselves.

The pile of buildings at Cashel is so full of interest that we may find an opportunity hereafter to describe them fully, with illustrations, but we shall not now attempt it. The effect, as we stood alone on the rock of Cashel, with a horizon of hills on all sides, was very impressive. The sun was sinking in a rich white light, the sky was beautifully serene, and the silence and feeling of solitude intense. For miles and miles around nothing alive was to be seen, not even a bird. The "city" of Cashel, as it is called, which is situated not

* See page 503.

† There are six class rooms, four of which are 36 feet by 23 feet, and two 26 feet by 23 feet. The library (upstairs) is 36 feet square, and opening from it, between columns and pilasters, are two rooms (one on each side) immediately over, and of the same size as the smaller class room. The builder is Mr. John Corry.

* Carpenters and bricklayers get from 30*s.* to 35*s.* per week.

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